

Research Article

Redefining the Basing Components of the Elective “English Literature” Course Syllabus at State Anatolian High Schools in Turkey: Study Based on Teachers’ Views¹



Literature

Keywords: English literature teaching, syllabus design, aims, contents, approaches, activities, assessment.

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Abstract

Given the fact that English literature syllabus has been currently missing from high school curriculums, and to help start off the process of syllabus designing, the present study has conducted an all-country survey with English teachers in order to identify the basic components of the syllabus such as aims, contents, approaches, activities, and assessment procedures. Using a quantitative research method this study employed a teacher questionnaire to identify the missing parts on the basis of teacher opinions. The findings demonstrated that the course of English literature will be more efficient if it adopts an approach that will target language development of students rather than development of their literature knowledge. It is thus suggested that all components of syllabus should be defined according to this main aim - language development of students.

Introduction

Though it has been seven years since the elective course of English literature was introduced in the curriculum of state high schools, no single syllabus document has been provided ever since that will explicitly or implicitly lay down the most basic components of the course - aims, approaches, contents, classroom activities, assessment procedures. Only a few lines in an official document issued by the Ministry of National Education (MNE, 2014) supplied some brief and rather unsatisfactory instructions about how teachers were to handle this course. The Ministry made it clear that in the event if any *elective* course lacks a proper curriculum of its own, teachers should use the curriculum of the related *compulsory* course, provided it exists. However, in the absence of the compulsory course, as is the case with English literature, the Ministry gave explicit instructions to teachers to design the missing syllabus themselves. As a result, syllabuses of all sorts, types and kinds, and with complete lack of state control for their adequacy, made appearance all over the country. Under such circumstances, it should not be surprising that these teacher-designed local syllabuses fell short from complying with national standards for program development which require that in the first place a proper needs analysis should be done before launching any program. Indeed, these randomly designed syllabuses cannot claim validity until they are justified by scientifically valid evidence. Nunan (1987) states that “while it is realized that few teachers are in the position of being able to design their own syllabuses, it is hoped that most are in a position to interpret and modify their syllabuses in the process of translating them into action.” Nunan (1987) expresses here a firm belief that the job of syllabus designing should be assigned to professionals and experts rather than ordinary teachers whom he considers non-qualified for this job in the first place.

Whatever wishful thinking there might be, the first impression from these locally designed syllabuses is that their suitability for Turkish high school EFL contexts should be questioned. An important question to be asked: should not priorities in English literature teaching be finally re-considered from the scientific perspective to help reflect high school realities in Turkey?

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Research Questions

In the light of the above-stated problem, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What should be the aims of teaching English literature at Turkish high schools?
2. What contents in terms of types and genres of English literature should be taught to help Turkish students achieve these aims?
3. What teaching approaches and activities should be adopted to ensure the attainment of these aims?
4. What kinds of assessment procedures should be adopted to determine the extent of students' attainment of aims?

Literature Review

With regard to the first basic component of the syllabus – aims – a matter of great importance is that, in the context of low English proficiency levels in Turkey, very serious considerations should be given to viewing the attainability as the first criterion for setting the aims. The current situation in Turkish high schools can be said to reflect the worldwide concern about English literature and the teaching of it to EFL students, expressed by Pope (1998) as “a growing concern with theory in practice, especially the politically urgent question of who learns and teachers what, how and why.” A worldwide embracement of the visionary ideas of Haynes (2009) has been prompting adoption of the holistic approach targeting multidirectional development of individuals. In this connection setting multiple aims is regarded to be in compliance with the criterion of attainability of aims. Viewed from this angle, English literature has a rich potential for setting multiple, and at the same time attainable, aims. A great many of scholars agree, in this light, that English literature can be taught not only with *literary aims*, but also with what they define as *linguistic*, *cultural*, and *individual aims* (Carter and Long, 1991; Collie & Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993; Parkinson and Thomas, 2000; Tarakcioglu, 2003, 2004; Taylor, 2000). While defining *literary aims* as the study of “critical concepts, literary conventions and meta-language” and the ability of students “to use such terms and concepts in talking and writing about literature”, Tarakcioglu (2003; 2004), in line with Carter and Long’s (1991) view of literature as not only an academic discipline but also as a resource for language learning, declares that literature can also be taught with *linguistic aims* and suggests that “literary works of art can be used as invaluable materials since they can serve many purposes related to language teaching when they are used as resources in EFL classes”. She goes further to make a statement for the necessity to add *cultural* and *individual aims* as attainable aims in literature teaching. She (2003) defines *cultural aims* as the ability of students to “penetrate and grasp the values, ideologies and philosophies of another culture”, and *individual aims* as the expression of individual experiences which “stand for and embody a kind of universal knowledge” (p.215-220). Carter and Long’s (1991) view of *cultural aims* in literature teaching can be described as an acknowledgement of the power of literature to facilitate students’ understanding and appreciation of different cultures and ideologies and familiarize them with others’ “tradition of thought, feeling and artistic form”. In terms of *individual aims* the emphasis is put on the concept of “personal growth” as an important aim in teaching of English literature (Carter and Long, 1991, pp.2-3).

In relation to the second component of the syllabus – contents – particular consideration should be given to the selection of suitable genres, types and themes. Thus, in terms of major literary genres, an inevitable question to be asked: how can students with poor vocabulary knowledge have an aesthetic appreciation of a lengthy novel while they struggle helplessly to understand the meanings of thousands and thousands words in the text? One cannot help wondering whether it will not be better to incorporate short stories as a suitable genre instead of novels, to save classroom time, energy and frustration on both teacher and student part. How can students understand the deviant language of poetry when, as a matter of fact, they do not even have the basic knowledge of English? The favor for short stories among four major genres is expressed by Campbell (2007) as the most appropriate literary genre for study in high schools for the many advantages they present when compared to

other genres: shortness of text, simpler plot designs, easily recognizable themes and characters, simpler literary devices, suitability for language-based instruction and for a wide range of classroom activities. All these added, short stories appear to be the most favored literary genre in high schools. Even native students are noticed to have preference for short stories and dislike for novels and poetry regarded as too difficult to understand (Campbell, 2007). Students frequently turn to cheating by applying to online websites as shortcuts for materials on such difficult literary texts as novels (Campbell, 2007). Besides short stories, drama also is viewed as a suitable type, for it plays an important role for the development of communicative skills and in motivating students for learning (Ayckbourn, 2004; Styan, 1967; Watson, 1983).

A long-standing debate has been going around the issue of whether to include in school syllabus the genre of popular literature to challenge the hegemony of literary canon. Only few scholars nowadays can defend single-handedly the exclusive authority of classical literature. Even the notion of classical literature itself has been challenged as it fails to present reasonable account explaining how certain works turn up to be called 'classical' while others do not. Parkinson and Thomas (2002) give their explanation of what lies behind it by pointing out at the existence of "'official' views on what constitutes good or bad literature, or at least, what is 'high' and what is 'low'" (p.24). They further indicate that "it is important to recognize that many literature syllabuses require students to engage with works which are on syllabus simply because they are canonical and that this may pose ... specific questions about ideology, relevance and the social significance of literature" (p.25). It is apparent from these statements that official approvals will not mean that 'non-classical' should not be considered worthy of being an object of study. Insistence on literary canon in school syllabuses was apparently a source of deep concern for Achebe (1987) when he harshly criticized the practice of including in syllabuses some classical works described by him as "... offensive and deplorable", and which, in his opinion, are included simply because they are "described by a serious scholar as 'among the half-dozen greatest short stories in the English language'" (p.57). Due to these and other concerns, a tendency has been growing to expand literature studies beyond the canon.

In terms of whether original texts or simplified texts should be included for study, how is it possible to expect from EFL high school students to read, understand and make comments about original texts written by such great authorities as Shakespeare, Fitzgerald, Joseph Conrad, Oscar Wilde, Wordsworth and others who are known for extremely expressive uses of finely-toned elitist language accessible only to sincere addicts of English literature with a perfect command of language? Would not it be more relevant to use graded readers to accommodate students' low levels of proficiency? On the other hand, simplified texts have also come under harsh criticism for damaging the authenticity of original texts. To offset this concern, Vincent and Carter (1986) indicate that literature is rich enough and can supply all types of texts suitable without adjustment to all proficiency levels. To help reconcile these evidently opposed views, Parkinson and Thomas (2000), declare that the major criterion should be a reader's personal enthusiasm.

The issue of thematic genres suitable for high school students requires careful consideration as these are important from the point of view of the necessity of taking into account individual preferences of students (Gee, 2000; Heath and Dewitt, 1993; Moje, Young, Readance and Moore, 2000). As Richison, Hernandez and Carter (2002) indicate "... we must choose texts that adolescents value. Today's students read pop culture and media texts with ease and embrace alternative representations such as drawings, film, cartoons, newspapers, and photographs." Wilhelm (1997) makes a statement which also supports these alternative representations as they "encourage students of all backgrounds to access and apply their prior knowledge as they read, increase comprehension, and improve the ability to predict, infer, and remember what has been read."

As for literature types classified according to the period of writing, serious thinking should be given to decisions about the use of different types: Old English literature, Renaissance literature, Victorian literature, modern literature or contemporary literature. In fact, one cannot help asking whether EFL students would really want to

read “Beowulf”, written in Old English, or any works written in English that can be understood only by literary experts. Would not it be more motivating for students to read contemporary literature based on real life contexts, which they can easily associate themselves with?

In terms of literary works classified according to cultural origins, a growing worldwide tendency to include world literature and multicultural literature in curriculums assumes importance as it presents a sign of the disclaimed position held by Anglo-Saxon literature. Considering this, would not it be relevant to include world literature or multicultural literature in Turkish schools too? The issue of curriculums monopolized by Anglo-Saxon (British style) literature has been long occupying the minds of many educationalists. There was even a movement criticizing this kind of syllabuses for being determined by ideological opinions of educational authorities who decided single-handedly which literary work to attribute a higher reading value and which not (Thomas and Parkinson, 2000). These biased approaches were frequently questioned by a great deal of studies suggesting that English literature syllabuses would be better off if included English translations of literature from different cultural origins to reflect cultural sensitivities of local contexts (Martin, 1983; Perren, 1963; Achebe, 1987). Perren’s (1963) criticism is directed at teachers working in EFL contexts whom he criticizes as making a mistake for assuming that “what is right in Britain” should be “valuable overseas” (p.13). Multicultural literature presenting works of diverse backgrounds is regarded as the most powerful stimulant for motivation as it includes local products likely to excite students’ curiosity and desire for learning (Sims, 1982, 1993; Piper, 1986; Tway, 1989; Norton, 1983, 1990).

As for the third basic component of the syllabus - approaches and activities – there are a great many of approaches and an infinite number of activities suitable for all kinds of contexts and situations. Traditional approach, new criticism, stylistics, language-based approach, reader response approach, story grammar approach, personal growth approach, literature as content or cultural approach, practical criticism are among the most known approaches. Deciding which approach to adopt is a delicate matter since it depends on many variables - aims of teaching, student profiles, teacher qualifications, etc. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) assert that, while making decisions, no strict lines should be drawn between approaches and suggest that they should be used in alternation. Allwright (1991) goes further to declare “the death of method”, and to say that no approach can be singled out, as neither is in position to explain what really goes on in classrooms due to the interaction of many variables, observable or not.

As for the fourth basic component of the syllabus - assessment procedures – some studies suggest that in contexts of EFL students with low proficiency levels the most suitable type of assessment would be the one which assigns a separate score for language and a separate score for literature (Parkinson and Thomas, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Sinclair, 1982; Collie and Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993; Spiro, 1991). The main argument stands on the attainability of the aims. As is argued, it will be relatively easier to assess linguistic competence as a more measurable aim than literary competence. Spiro (1991) gives a supportive argument when warning that assessment of literary competence as an aim could be problematic since “enjoyment, appreciation and personal response [are] too imprecise to be workable [since] every participant [...] has a personal interpretation of this competence, and each as a result, is failing the other’s expectations” (p.55). Spiro recommends that students should not be evaluated just for their skills as literary critics but also for their skills as competent language users (p.18). In addition to the assessment types peculiar to literature classes, traditional means of assessment types such as norm-based and criterion-based types of assessment, coursework assessment, final examinations, self-assessment, peer-assessment and feedback need also be considered for inclusion in syllabuses, as each of them has its own benefits.

Methodology

This study was based on a quantitative research method using questionnaire as a data collection tool. The questionnaire was applied on 108 non-native English teachers working in state high schools in seven geographical regions of Turkey. To make accurate measures of teacher responses 5-point Likert scales were applied. Statistical operations for analysis of quantitative data were based on computer package program (version 20.0) SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Prior to the final administration, a pilot study was held on a sample of teachers to prove the validity and reliability of the tool.

Results and Discussions

Aims

The mean scores of the participants' responses about aims in English Literature teaching are given in Table 1 and provide thus an answer to the first research question. Analysis of the results demonstrate that among four major categories of aims in English literature teaching, though all of the aims appear to have received positive points, a significant difference was found between the category of linguistic aims, on the one hand, and the other three categories, on the other hand.

Teachers, stating a strong agreement that English literature should be taught with linguistic aims, appear to support the view that literature study should be associated (integrated) with language study. In this way, they reflect Tarakçioğlu's (2003) statement that "literary works ... can serve many purposes related to language teaching". They can be said, on the other hand, to disapprove the arguments which consider literature and language studies as two independent disciplines, unrelated to each other and with no points of common (McRae, 1991). Teacher responses seem to reflect a certain concern with the actual situation in EFL learning in Turkey. Conscious of the actual purpose of studying English literature from the point of view of their students, teachers appear to be concerned that English literature should be taught with the main purpose of improving their proficiencies. In this way they seem to provide an answer to Pope's (1998) question of "who learns and teaches ... why?" Likewise in reflection of Ganakumaran (2002) and Krishnasamy' (2015) arguments, teachers agree that low language proficiency is a major shortcoming in English literature teaching, and, therefore, make a strong statement for the necessity to incorporate linguistic aims as the first priority aims. Teachers can thus be viewed to prefer teaching English literature in ways that target language proficiency development of students. Within the category of linguistic aims, development of comprehension skills, development of vocabulary knowledge, and development of awareness of and abilities to use figurative meanings of language were found as the most favored. Among these vocabulary knowledge development was rated still the highest! Many studies point out at the insufficiency of students in terms of vocabulary knowledge to be the most important factor affecting learning of literature: Thus, Mwape (1984), in reference to these studies, remarks that many EFL students "lack a critical vocabulary to enable them read a book intelligently and skillfully" (p.14).

On the other hand, the fact that all categories of aims generally received positive opinions from teachers appears to support Obeidat's statement that literature should pursue not only linguistic aims but other aims as well for their beneficial influence on cultural, intellectual, social and psychological development of students (in Abdullah et al, 2007, p.24). Teachers, agreeing to pursue such cultural aims as 'development of capacity to compare one's own culture and another one', and 'development of awareness of universal values of humanity' seem to agree with Tarakçioğlu's (2003, p.215) definition of cultural aims as "grasping of values, ideologies and philosophies of another culture". Among individual aims, high score for 'development of critical thinking skills using imagination and creativity' can be viewed to reflect Tarakçioğlu's (2003) definition of individual aims as "open-mindedness (and) non-judgmental attitude". Among literary aims, 'development of knowledge and use of key literary concepts such as plot, setting, character, turning point, theme, and narrator', also received a high score as

an aim of English literature teaching. This literary aim agrees with the definition by Tarakçioğlu (2003) that literature teaching involves “a considerable baggage of critical concepts and meta-language and [...] students’ [...] ability to use such terms and concepts”. However, the comparative analysis of teacher views from the point of view of all four categories of aims has revealed that, although positive points were given to all of the aims, literary aims appear to be the least preferred. There can be several explanations for this. First, teachers might not be familiar with the teaching of English literature as an academic discipline due to pre-service training at ELT departments mostly focused on language teaching. Second, teachers’ strong agreement with linguistic aims and lesser agreement with literary aims may be explained by their belief that language-based approach, accommodating two syllabuses at the same time - literature syllabus and language syllabus, will be more appropriate, as it seems to be the best way of managing low proficiency levels of students and an easier means of teaching English literature. Teachers seem to be aware that, by putting emphasis on improvement of language knowledge, students can learn to appreciate literature in less stressful ways. Indeed, a study by Abdullah et al (2007, p.48) confirms the existence of such a need on students’ part. As they cite from Widdowson (1984, p.146), students are not keen on learning literary terms and concepts, which they find too difficult to identify because of a rather complicated nature of literary language, too deviant and hard to understand. Finally, teachers may have preferred linguistic aims not out of fear for being professionally incompetent in the domain of English literature but rather out of pedagogical necessity to meet the need of their students to improve proficiency levels.

Literature Types

The mean scores of teacher responses, in answer to the second research question about the content component of the syllabus in terms of different types of literature, are given in Table 2. The results reveal that among four main genres of literature short stories and drama were found to score higher than novels and poetry. It can be said, therefore, that a significant difference exists between scores given to short stories and drama, on the one hand, and scores given to novels and poetry, on the other hand. This seems to agree with Campbell’s (2007) strong statement in favor for the use of short stories in literature classes. In terms of drama, teachers’ agreement, although positive, was yet moderate. This might be explained by their probably having perceptions of drama as being too difficult to put in practice, and requiring a great deal of preparation, no matter how enjoyable and pleasant it could be (Thomas and Parkinson, 2007). Whatever the negative perceptions of drama, the high score it received demonstrates that teachers were aware of its far-reaching benefits for the development of language skills, fostering self-confidence and self-control, and for promoting empathy with others. As for the genre of poetry, it received a score significantly lower than that for short stories and drama. This seems to agree with Gill’s (2006) statement that poetry is the least preferred of all literary genres by both students and teachers. Possibly teachers’ dislike for poetry can be attributed to the difficulty of teaching its deviant nature. As Parkinson and Thomas (2000) point out teachers must be professionally competent in poetry and acquainted with the techniques of teaching, without which it would be impossible to expect them to teach it effectively.

The mean scores about classical literature and popular literature reveal that popular literature was more preferred by teachers than classical. This might be another piece of evidence to contribute to the worldwide movement for inclusion of popular literature into literature syllabuses. The fact that majority of the participants were ELT graduates might explain this preference for popular literature. Parkinson and Thomas’s (2000) argued that pre-service training prompts teacher choice of contents. Since literary canon is not the major subject of ELT graduates it should not be surprising that they should refrain from choosing it as the content for study.

In terms of thematic genres, teachers appear to agree on those themes which are most likely to attract students’ attention and motivate them. This seems to be in line with the suggestions of Gee (2000), Heath and Dewitt (1993), and Moje et al. (2000) that multiple thematic genres should be the focus of literature classrooms and should take into account students’ individual interests. Thus, adventures, mystery, comics, picture novels, graphic novels, cartoon stories, folk literature, fairy tales, fables, songs, legends, comedies, humor, parody, satire

and detective stories were rated as the most suitable thematic genres. Apparently, teachers seem to regard these themes as the most convenient themes for high school students, easy to understand, and enjoyable. Picture novels, graphic novels, comics and cartoons are often found to be the frequent choice of many EFL/ESL teachers in secondary education because, as Campbell (2007) argues, with little textual input such visual representations of literature help facilitate learners' understanding of literature and make reading really enjoyable. Interestingly enough, theme of horror, terror, violence and tragedy received the lowest score. Teachers appear to make a conscious choice of protecting their students from themes containing violence, aggressive, offensive speech, and sad endings.

In terms of the periods of writing, a significant difference was found between contemporary literature, on the one hand, and modern literature, Old Age literature, Middle Age literature, and literature from the Renaissance to the Victorian Age, on the other hand. Teachers choosing contemporary literature as the most suitable type appeared to reflect the ideas of educational philosophy prevailing nowadays that literature teaching should focus on works based on real-life contexts in order to encourage students to make connections with their own lives and to bring their own experiences into processes of interaction with texts.

In terms of cultural origins of literature, the mean scores revealed that literature originated from English-speaking countries was more preferred than multicultural and world literature. This is indeed an interesting finding as it seems to contradict the arguments of the literary movements which state that, in order to be teachable, English literature programs in EFL contexts should include translations from multicultural and world literature, and should reflect, as Perren (1963) and Martin (1983) point it out, various cultural sensitivities of local students and teachers. The participants' lesser preference for multicultural literature seems also to disagree with Sims's (1993) argument that multicultural literature is a "mirror and a window into students' own experiences" (p.39). In countries like India, Singapore, Malaysia, and Zambia, English literature programs include plenty of works of non-English origin. This striking difference from the findings of the present study could be explained by certain historical realities. Unlike Turkey, who succeeded throughout its history to preserve its political independence and sovereignty, these countries, on the contrary, have long remained British colonies in their past. No wonder if perceptions of their colonial past cause feelings of resentment and refusal to shape their programs along the lines of British (Anglo-Saxon) literature. Martin (1983) and Perren (1963) refer to such local perceptions as perceptions of "imperialist orientation". The fact that Turkey never had a colonial past susceptible to create negative feelings may explain teachers' preference for literature of English origin. Besides, their choice might have been prompted by Turkey's general orientation towards Western values as understood in terms of values of democracy and universal human rights. Teachers' high score for the cultural aim 'develop capacity to compare and contrast one's own culture and another one', in this light, should be interpreted as 'develop capacity to compare and contrast one's own culture and culture of English-speaking communities'.

Approaches

In answer to the third research question, the mean scores, given in Table 3, reveal a significant difference between Literature as Personal Growth or Enrichment approach and Story Grammar approach, on the one hand, and the other approaches, on the other hand. However, it should be added that, Reader Response Approach and Language-based approach also received, though on a smaller degree, positive points very close to the first two. Thus, teacher opinions were found comparatively higher on these four approaches. As appears, what these four approaches usually pursue is quite consistent with the aims that were highlighted within this study. Thus it appears that Literature as Growth or Enrichment approach, which scored the highest, is consistent with the individual aim of 'developing critical thinking skills, and skills of imagination and creativity' which scored the highest within its own category. On the other hand, as McKay (1982) asserts, besides expanding individual qualities, such as critical thinking skills, this approach also develops linguistic and literary competences, and can

be regarded thus to be consistent with the study's purpose of setting multiple aims. It can be inferred from here that this approach is perfectly consistent with linguistic, literary and individual aims of English literature teaching. This also agrees with Stan's (2015) statement that "literature holds a prominent role in children's personal development since it is not only a tool in language learning but also a source of personal growth".

Although lesser than for Literature as Personal Growth approach, Story Grammar approach also received a score higher than other approaches. Although the literary aims, which this approach usually pursues, received scores lower than other categories of aims, a caution is required before suggesting any contradiction between the findings. It will be useful to throw light on Story Grammar approach to understand what it exactly means and wants to achieve. This approach is considered to be the easiest of all approaches in literature teaching and is usually advised to be applied in case of weak students. It aims thus to teach the simplest literary concepts (plot, characters, setting, theme, etc.) and uses the easiest of literary genres - short stories - without getting into the complex domains of the academic discipline. The fact that it uses short stories as a means of achieving its aims is consistent with the findings of the present study about short stories as the most preferred genre. Moreover, analysis of the literary aims suggests a certain consistency of findings between this approach and the literary aim of 'development of the knowledge of literary concepts such as plot, setting, turning point, themes, narrator and characters', which received the highest score within its own category.

The third choice about Reader Response Approach demonstrates the importance of student-centered learning with students allowed to express freely their individual feelings, emotions and opinions. Hence, it can be considered to be consistent with Literature as Personal Growth or Enrichment Approach, as it targets individual development of students. Although Language-based approach, based on integration of language study with literature study, was the fourth choice of approach, it appears that, when this finding is analyzed in relation with the first choice - Literature as Personal Growth, these two pursue the same aim of integrating the study of language and the study of literature. As for Story Grammar approach, Language-based approach agrees with it in that both are concerned with the situation of weak students and seek to present them with easier and less stressful ways of studying literature.

As for classroom activities, 11 activities out of 28 were scored significantly higher than others. On the other hand, it was noticed that, within these 11 activities, (1) audio-visual support, (2) brain storming and (3) guessing/predicting activities were scored still higher. As appears these activities are all student-centered and reflect most contemporary methods of teaching, which target multiple competence development of individuals. Teachers seem to have chosen classroom activities which they believe students and themselves will be most comfortable with. In other words, they seem to prefer activities which are less challenging, and which require less preparation and less prior knowledge. This finding seems to confirm the findings of Abdullah et al (2007) which indicate that teachers tend to choose those kinds of teaching methods which they believe to be most suitable for EFL students. Moreover, activities like group discussions, movies, films, drama, story-telling, students' commentary are known as interactive methods of learning. This confirms Richison et al's (2002) argument that students need to be provided with non-traditional and interaction-based forms of learning such as pop culture, media texts, and "alternative representations such as drawing, film, cartoons, newspapers, and photographs" (p.76). Teachers' choice of audio-visual and graphic forms of representation echoes Wilhelm's (1997) statement that the use of visual imagery encourages students' comprehension and abilities to "predict, infer, and remember what has been read." (pp.117-18). On the other hand, grammar translation exercises, teacher lecturing, the use of L1, stylistic analysis, linguistic analysis, and discourse analysis were classroom activities that teachers scored significantly lower. Lower scores for these activities and methods of teaching can be explained by teacher perceptions of them as outdated, unpopular and inefficient methods of teaching. In other words, grammar teaching and teacher-centered methods of instruction were found to be less preferred methods of instruction. Perhaps, they were less preferred because of the prevailing teacher perceptions that they might be cognitively too challenging for

learners. In other words, it can be said that teachers were aware of the fact that students' interests, needs and abilities should be taken into account.

Assessment Types

In answer to the fourth research question the mean scores of teacher responses to the questionnaire about different assessment types are given in Table 4. Within the category of norm-based and criterion-based assessment types, the findings of the present study revealed that criterion-based assessment was more agreed upon than the norm-based one. The choice of criterion-based assessment is meaningful since it underlines the importance of the human element in education as the basis for any assessment schemes. This finding is very important in terms that it draws attention to the need of reconsidering assessment schemes currently in practice in Turkey generally exam-oriented and encouraging competition among students with disregard for their individual differences. On the other hand, teachers' indecision on whether the norm-based assessment should be adopted or not, could imply in line with the arguments of Parkinson and Thomas (2000) that a more balanced approach should be adopted in relation to the two types of assessment, since both have their own advantages and benefits.

The study found a significant difference between opinions of teachers about whether a separate score for literature and a separate score for language should be incorporated in the assessment scheme of the English literature syllabus. Although both received positive scores, teachers' opinions were still higher on a score for language than on a score for literature. This is consistent with teachers' views about Personal Growth approach and Language-based approach aiming at integrating language study with literature study, about linguistic aims and classroom-activities targeting language development of students. The fact that in a literature class a score should be given for linguistic competence reflects a number of arguments about the necessity to use the integrated approach in literature teaching and the need to assess literary competence in integration with linguistic competence of students (Parkinson and Thomas, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Sinclair, 1982; Collie and Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993). At the same time, the higher preference for the score for language can be explained, in reflection of Spiro's (1991) argument, by teacher perceptions that it is more difficult to assess literary competence than linguistic competence. This view is supported by a number of studies which find that it is rather difficult to assess affective and cognitive domains of literature as the concept of literary competence suggests (Harrison, 1973; Paffard, 1962; in Mwape, 1984). Developing a skill to demonstrate literary appreciation, a quality of literary competence, for instance, is considered to be an objective difficult to assess, as it takes much longer time for such a skill to manifest itself. Thus, teachers seem to prefer assessing what appears as "more measurable" in literature (Mwape, 1984).

Another important finding concerns the fact that teachers scored coursework (unit-related performances, task assignments, projects, PowerPoint assignments, portfolio works, tests and quizzes) higher than final examinations. This means that teachers are more sensitive to process-oriented learning than to product-oriented. Teachers appear to value students' learning experiences more than their abilities to demonstrate the attainment of objectives at the end of instruction. Moreover, the fact that teachers gave higher scores for formative assessment supports this statement. This type of assessment does not aim at evaluating students' performance and behaviors by giving them bad or good marks but rather encourages them to reflect on their own learning, develop awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, and develop strategies to improve their performances.

Conclusions

Redefining the basic components of the syllabus of the elective English literature course has demonstrated that language improvement should be accepted as a priority goal for English literature teaching at Turkish high schools. In other words, linguistic aims should be accepted as the first priority aims. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that other aims also received positive points and, therefore, should be accounted for, although at

a lower degree of priority. In terms of classroom activities and techniques, audio-visual supports, movies, videos, films, overhead projectors, brain storming, guessing/predicting activities, drawing pictures, story-boards, maps, visual and graphic representations, drama techniques, story-telling, role-playing, small group works and whole class activities are suggested as the most efficient, the simplest, and the easiest means for teaching this course. Moreover, the current study suggests that the content component of the syllabus should include such types and genres of literature as short stories, drama, popular literature, simplified literary works (graded readers), and contemporary literature. Educational authorities should ensure there are sufficient resources, materials and technologies to put such suggestions in practice. The famous 'Fatih Project', for instance, could be reconsidered in this light to serve the purposes of English literature course. Different interactive schemes and designs like videos and films based on the contents and the language development aim of English literature teaching could be useful in this sense. Seminars and in-service training programs could be organized to assist teachers to make the most effective use of these technologies in English literature classrooms.

Since the majority of teachers from this study are graduates from ELT departments, it should not be surprising that these teachers should be considered as not qualified to teach English literature. Although ELT programs do include the subject of English literature, to what extent this training is effective is not known. A number of studies on literature teaching in EFL contexts have demonstrated that ELT teachers are not properly equipped with the knowledge of teaching methodologies in English literature. Thus, a study by Kee (in Abdullah et al, 2007) showed that ELT teachers have perceptions of professional insufficiency in literature teaching. Pre-service and in-service training needs thus to be reconsidered to improve teacher qualifications with regard to English literature teaching. In addition, a proper syllabus designing should be put under way to remedy the absence of the syllabus for the English literature course.

Further Research

The present study has put forward some useful suggestions for the syllabus design of the English literature course. The extent of the applicability and suitability of these suggestions necessitates additional research for more supportive evidence. In fact, it is considered important to investigate the current practices through an extensive fieldwork and classroom observations. So far, no fieldwork evidence has been presented about the ways teachers handle the teaching of the English literature course in high schools. Perhaps, more light could be thrown by obtaining first-hand reports from face-to-face interviews with teachers.

Since the present study has been limited to teachers' opinions only, further research could be conducted at obtaining the opinions of students - their perceptions, views and preferences about the English literature course: whether it improves their proficiency; increases their vocabulary knowledge; is enjoyable; motivates them; or even if it is necessary at all. Syllabus designers have to ensure that all sides are taken into account. Surveying just teachers would not be enough to reach conclusive suggestions. Moreover, additional research can be conducted on compiling of literature anthologies for high schools, based on the suggestions of the current study. A comparative study of other countries' experiences in teaching of English literature can also contribute to the subject of the study. It could guide the process of syllabus designing in Turkey and help prepare the necessary ground for the knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange.

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Table 1

Mean Scores of Teachers' Responses about the Aims of English Literature Teaching

Aims of English Literature Teaching		Mean	St D
Linguistic Aims	13 Improve language proficiency levels	4,06	0,812
	14 Develop linguistic skills (four language skills)	4,03	0,767
	15 Develop comprehension skills (meaningful learning)	4,21	0,737
	16 Develop communicative skills (effective communication with others in English)	3,97	0,942
	17 Develop vocabulary knowledge	4,40	0,655
	18 Develop knowledge of language forms, grammatical structures and linguistic varieties in style, register, and genre.	4,07	0,817
	19 Develop awareness of and a practical skill in metaphorical uses of language	4,30	0,714
Cultural Aims	20 Expand articulation, accuracy and fluency	3,95	0,79
	21 Develop awareness of the literature of English speaking communities such as British, American, Australian Literature	3,95	0,847
	22 Develop understanding / appreciation of cultures, ideologies and values of others	4,04	0,784
	23 Develop understanding / appreciation of one's own culture, ideologies and values	4,10	0,748
	24 Develop capacity to compare and contrast one's own culture and another one	4,19	0,712
	25 Develop awareness of universal values of humanity	4,19	0,712
	26 Develop knowledge of intellectual, social, political and cultural traditions	4,18	0,708
Individual Aims	27 Develop awareness about manners, attitudes, beliefs, feelings	4,17	0,803
	28 Give access to authentic language sources, real life contexts, authentic situations and genuine acts of communication in target language	4,01	0,815
	29 Give lifelong pleasure and enjoyment from reading literature	4,01	0,881
	30 Develop cognitive and affective skills (social and emotional skills)	4,00	0,773
	31 Develop critical thinking skills using imagination and creativity	4,19	0,699
	32 Train intelligence	3,89	0,857
	33 Cultivate a sense of self-fulfilment	3,96	0,831
Literary Aims	34 Develop capacity to find inherent meanings in literary texts.	4,03	0,837
	35 Develop capacity to draw moral values from literary texts and relate them to one's own life by giving free expression to feelings, ideas and thoughts	3,97	0,767
	36 Develop understanding and appreciation of the aesthetic values of literature	4,01	0,767
	37 Develop knowledge about literary canon (high literature /works of authority)	3,84	0,888
	38 Develop understanding of literary deviations from rules and norms	3,79	0,865
	39 Develop knowledge and the use of key literary concepts: plot, setting, turning point, theme, narrator, characterisation etc.	4,07	0,851
	40 Develop knowledge about literary genres, movements, authors, biographies	4,08	0,775
	41 Develop knowledge and ability to use key literary devices: allegory, metaphor, alliteration, simile etc.	4,04	0,885

Table 2

Mean Scores of Teachers' Responses about the Contents of English Literature in Terms of Literature Types

Types of English Literature		Mean	St D
Genres	42 Novels	3,61	1,126
	43 Short stories	4,36	0,603
	44 Drama	4,13	0,876
	45 Poetry	3,66	1,078
Classics/Popular	46 Classics	3,55	1,088
	47 Popular	3,87	1,033
Original/ Simplified	48 Original	2,94	1,044
	49 Simplified	4,19	0,787
Thematic genres	50 Realistic fiction/ autobiography	3,91	0,838
	51 Tragedy / horror/ violence	3,53	0,932
	52 Adventure / mystery	4,20	0,608
	53 Comics (picture novels, graphic novels, cartoon stories)	4,18	0,747
	54 Folk literature (songs, legends, fairy tales, epic, fables, proverbs)	4,05	0,79
	55 Fantastic / Science-fiction	4,02	0,773
	56 Love stories/ romanticism	3,89	0,857
	57 Comedy / humour/ parody / satire	4,13	0,821
	58 Detective stories	4,19	0,755
Period	59 Old Ages – Middle Ages	3,11	1,088
	60 Renaissance/ Elizabethan/ Restoration / Romantic/Victorian	3,28	1,134
	61 Modern period (1900 – 1945)	3,92	0,844
	62 Contemporary period (1945 –)	4,13	0,876
Cultural Origin	63 Literature of English-speaking countries	4,04	0,722
	64 Multicultural (World) literature	3,81	0,952

Table 3

Mean Scores of Teachers' Responses on Approaches and Activities in English Literature Teaching

Teaching Approaches and Types of Activities		Mean	St D
Approaches	65 Reader Response Approach	3,84	0,751
	66 Practical Criticism	3,61	0,852
	67 New Criticism	3,48	0,902
	68 Traditional Criticism	3,43	0,969
	69 Story Grammar	3,94	0,771
	70 Stylistics	3,40	0,831
	71 Language-based approach (integrated approach)	3,76	0,819
	72 Literature as content or cultural approach	3,70	0,846
	73 Literature as Personal Growth or Enrichment	4,06	0,783
Activities	74 Teacher lecturing, providing information, commenting about text and the author.	3,44	1,017
	75 The use of L1 in teaching English literature	3,40	1,076
	76 Audio-visual support (movies/ films / video/ overhead projector)	4,44	0,631
	77 Grammar translation exercises	3,11	1,138
	78 Reading exercises: extensive reading, reading aloud, clos reading	4,25	0,672
	79 Story-boards/ picturing / drawing characters, settings, scenes	4,28	0,695
	80 Character maps / story maps	4,22	0,715
	81 Visual and graphic representations to illustrate the story grammar	4,21	0,749
	82 Guided text-based writing exercises: finding factual information, summary writing, paraphrasing, rephrasing	4,05	0,79
	83 Language skills development activities: cloze test, vocabulary exercises, predicting lexical collocations, word associations, jigsaw	4,05	0,921
	84 Task-based activities: information-gap, reasoning-gap, opinion-gap	4,08	0,775
	85 Rhythm and rhyme exercises	3,64	0,901
	86 Listening comprehension exercises	4,15	0,807
	87 Study of idioms and colloquial expressions	4,06	0,789
	88 Drama techniques: story-telling, role-play etc	4,26	0,715
	89 Identifying literary devices: plot, characters, setting, turning point	4,21	0,711
	90 Internet and library research	4,20	0,783
	91 Brain storming	4,39	0,653
	92 Students' oral presentations	4,28	0,747
	93 Small group or whole class debates and discussions	4,29	0,724
	94 Students' comments /interpretations about the text and/or the issues raised by it	4,30	0,673
	95 Guessing /predicting (What is going to happen next?)	4,43	0,63
	96 Composition exercises: inferencing, idea formulation, generalization, critical and creative thinking, theme discussion, speculating on literary devices & style	4,05	0,741
	97 Identifying literary terms: simile, metaphor, imagery, irony, personification, semantic ambiguity etc.	3,70	0,899
	98 Culture awareness, comparing/ contrasting different cultures with one's own	4,08	0,822
	99 Stylistic/ linguistic analysis	3,46	0,942
	100 Discourse analysis	3,55	0,961
	101 Use of computer programs	3,59	0,977

Table 4

Mean Scores of Teachers' Responses on the Types of Assessment Procedures

	Types of Assessment	Mean	Std
102	Norm-based assessment	3,20	0,915
103	Criterion-based assessment	3,69	0,861
104	Score for language	3,86	0,814
105	Score for literature	3,70	0,835
106	Coursework assessment	4,03	0,703
107	Final examinations	3,92	0,844
108	Self-assessment	4,01	0,803
109	Peer assessment	3,83	0,859
110	Formative feedback	4,03	0,742